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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001101

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SUBJECT: MONUC: FARDC OVER ITS HEAD IN NKUNDA FIGHT

Classified By: Charge S. Brock (1.4 b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Senior MONUC officials reviewed the current security situation in the eastern DRC September 11-12 in discussions with AF Senior Adviser Shortley following cessation of hostilities between government troops and forces loyal to renegade General Nkunda. The operation appears to have been poorly-planned and executed and was implemented in the face of opposition from the military hierarchy. An uneasy lull in the fighting remains, with both sides regrouping and consolidating positions. SRSG Swing is open to U.S. efforts to facilitate dialogue. He said that any negotiations with Nkunda would have to focus on brassage for his troops and exile for Nkunda, but warned that Nkunda would use talks to press the FDLR issue and to heighten his own importance. Kabila is now fully prepared to support a diplomatic initiative led by South Africa. End comment.

¶2. (C) Discussions in Kinshasa September 11-12 between A/S Frazer's Senior Adviser Tim Shortley and MONUC officials including military staff officers and SRSG William Swing focused on the security situation in the eastern DRC, the Congolese military's (FARDC) failed attempt to implement a military solution in North Kivu and Kabila's opposition to negotiations with renegade General Laurent Nkunda.

¶3. (C) Shortley's discussions with MONUC military staff highlighted the failure of the FARDC's recent offensive against Nkunda's forces and its lack of logistical capacity. A/DATT and PolCouns sat in.

¶4. (C) MONUC's briefing clarified that although the current cessation in hostilities is holding, dangerous flash points remain in areas where the two forces are closely positioned, including Sake and Karuba, located around 20 miles west of Goma, and areas west of Runyoni in Rutshuru Territory. Both sides appear to be using the present lull to consolidate their positions and re-supply. MONUC estimates that with recent reinforcement by the 6th, 14th and 15th integrated brigades (IBs), FARDC now has around 10,000 troops deployed in the province, compared to around 4000 hard-core Nkunda elements and 3000 FDLR. For its part, MONUC is redeploying a fourth battalion of Indian troops to reinforce its North Kivu Brigade.

¶5. (C) The briefing also made clear that the arrival of MONUC peacekeepers in and around Sake saved the 15th IB after it disintegrated and fled toward Goma following clashes with Nkunda's forces, much as the 14th had done in December 2006. MONUC's line is that its peacekeepers entered Sake to protect the civilian population and deter Nkunda from making additional advances. Positioning themselves between the two forces enabled MONUC's North Kivu Brigade to create

conditions necessary for a self-imposed cessation of hostilities in and around the town.

¶16. (C) MONUC's analysis is that the FARDC's performance was predictable. The airlift from Kisangani of some 3,000 troops of the new 15th IB was impressive, but failure may in retrospect have been inevitable. It now appears Defense Minister Chihez Diemu ordered the operation in the face of unanimous opposition from the military hierarchy, including Chief of Staff General Dieudonne Kayembe, and was not willing to coordinate plans with MONUC. Logistical shortcomings redflagged overconfidence in a quick and easy victory: FARDC troops were out of food soon after arrival, were not paid and ran short on ammunition.

¶17. (C) Briefers noted that MONUC has begun distributing MREs to FARDC troops. They also reported that two Ilyushin flights totaling some 70 tons of ammunition and supplies recently touched down in Kisangani from points respectively in Libya and Sudan. These flights did not follow military re-supply requirements laid down by the UN Security Council.

¶18. (C) MONUC believes that the threshold for Rwandan intervention is very high at present. It does not believe that the Rwandan government or military has provided cross-border assistance to Nkunda or direct Rwandan Defense Force support.

¶19. (C) At a dinner hosted by the Charge d'Affaires September 12 SRSG Swing appeared receptive to USG efforts to facilitate a resolution to the current confrontation. He expressed support for a U.S. strategy to extend state control, DDRRR, SSR and a hearts-and-minds outreach program in eastern DRC. He also encouraged the USG to urge Kabila to resolve the

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present crisis through diplomacy.

¶10. (C) Swing confirmed the military briefers' report that Kabila had imported over 35 tons of RPGs and 40 tons of light ammunition in violation of UN Security Council sanctions. He reported that Kabila had forbidden MONUC to undertake any negotiations with Nkunda in a meeting the day before that included MONUC Force Commander General Babacar Gaye. According to Swing, Gaye told Kabila categorically that FARDC is not prepared to take on Nkunda's forces.

¶11. (C) Swing said that any negotiations with Nkunda would have to focus on sending his troops for integration into the FARDC and exile for Nkunda. He said Nkunda would use talks to press for resolution of the FDLR issue and to heighten his own importance.

¶12. (C) Regarding the LRA, Swing reported that two FARDC battalions are currently being trained and will be ready to deploy in and around Garamba National Park by December or January. The objective is to push the LRA out of the park by January or February.

¶13. (C) Comment: All indications are that the impetus for the offensive against Nkunda originated with Kabila, but it was poorly executed and supported by Defense Minister Chihez in the face of opposition from the military hierarchy. Chihez's role leaves him increasingly vulnerable to replacement in the anticipated government reshuffle. Foreign Minister Mbusa Nyamwisi told us in a separate conversation that the Presidency has reassessed the viability of a military solution. It is clear from the events and conversations of the past days that Kabila is now fully prepared to support a diplomatic initiative led by South Africa (septel). End comment.

¶14. (C) Mr. Shortley cleared this message.

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